

The Highland Council

5 September 2013

Agenda Item	16
Report No	HC/37/13

Amendments to Approved Duties for Members

Joint Report by Director of Finance and Assistant Chief Executive

Summary

Members have the right to claim expenses when carrying out “approved duties”. The current list of existing “approved duties” is attached (in Appendix A). Recent changes to Committee structures and the introduction of new ways of working have meant that the Council needs to make changes to the list of “approved duties”.

1. Background

- 1.1 ‘Members’ Approved Duties’ is Appendix 2 of the document, [“Members’ Remuneration and Expenses - Guidance for Members \(May 2012\)”](#).

This document is regularly updated to include changes to allowances and salary levels agreed by the Scottish Government.

Changes to the list of “approved duties” in the document have been made less often and now need to be updated to take into account recent changes to committee structures and new ways of working.

2. Proposed Changes

- 2.1 For “approved duty” 1.1:

“Attendance at a meeting of the Council, or any of its Committees, whether the Councillor is a member of the Committee or not”.

- 2.2 This wording would allow a Member to attend any Area Committee in Highland regardless of the Ward they represent.

- 2.3 It is recommended that the wording be revised as follows:-

“Attendance at a meeting of the Council or any of its Committees, whether the Councillor is a member of the Committee or not. However in the case of Planning Application Committees, Licencing Committees or Area Committees this will only apply to Councillors (with the exception of office bearers) within the relevant Wards.”

2.4 **“Approved duty” 1.2** currently reads:

“Attendance at a meeting of a sub-committee or working group of the Council, by members of that sub-committee or working group. Attendance by a non-member should be by invitation of the parent committee or its chair.”

2.5 The current wording does not reflect recent changes to standing orders relevant to sub-committees or Working Groups.

2.6 It is recommended that the wording is revised as follows:

“Attendance at a meeting of a sub-Committee of the Council, by members of that sub-committee or substitute members where they are attending in place of main committee members. Attendance at a meeting of a working group by members of that working group. Attendance by a non-member should be by invitation of the parent committee or its chair.”

2.7 **“Approved duty” 4.1** currently reads:

“Attendance by the Convener, Leader of the Administration, Committee Chairs, and Vice Chairs to Council offices or establishments where the visit is relevant to the Member’s duties. Attendance by other Members should be restricted to meeting days or visits where prior appointments have been arranged”.

2.8 It is recommended that the wording is changed to:

“Attendance by Office Bearers to Council offices or establishments where the visit is relevant to the Member’s duties. Attendance by other Members should be restricted to meeting days or visits where prior appointments have been arranged with officials.”

Office Bearers are identified as Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees, Council Leader, Depute Leader and Convener.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Recent changes to Committee Structures and working practices have meant that we need to make small changes to the current list of Members’ “approved duties”.

4. Implications

4.1 Resource, Legal, Equalities, Climate Change/Carbon Clever and Risk implications

There are no specific implications contained within this report on resource, legal, equalities, climate change/carbon clever and risk implications. However qualification of approved duties should reduce the risk of expense claims being

made in error.

5. Recommendations:

Members are asked to approve changes to the list of “approved duties” as follows:-

- i) 1.1: Attendance at a meeting of the Council or any of its Committees, whether the Councillor is a Member of the Committee or not. However in the case of Planning Application Committees or Area Committees this will only apply to Councillors (with the exception of office bearers) within the relevant Wards.
- ii) 1.2: Attendance at a meeting of a sub-committee of the Council, by members of that sub-committee or substitute members where they are attending in place of main committee members. Attendance at a meeting of a working group by members of that working group.
- iii) 4.1: Attendance by Office Bearers to Council offices or establishments where the visit is relevant to the Member’s duties. Attendance by other Members should be restricted to meeting days or visits where prior appointments have been arranged with officials.

Designation: Director of Finance and Assistant Chief Executive

Date: 23 August 2013

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Background Papers: None

Members' Approved Duties

MEETINGS

- 1.1 Attendance at a meeting of the Council, or any of its committees, whether the Councillor is a Member of the Committee or not.
- 1.2 Attendance at a meeting of a sub-committee, or working group of the Council, by Members of that sub-committee or working group. Attendance by a non-member should be by invitation of the parent committee or its chair.
- 1.3 Attendance at meetings or site visits requested by the committee.
- 1.4 Attendance at meetings or working groups of COSLA and other official bodies to which a Member has been appointed to serve by the Council or COSLA except where expenses are payable by the other body.
- 1.5 Attendance at meetings as official Council representatives with the Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament, Scotland Office or other government representatives and with bodies recognised by the Council in connection with the carrying out of its functions.
- 1.6 Attendance at meetings of Community Councils and School Boards/Parent Councils with responsibilities in the Members electoral ward area.
- 1.7 Attendance at constituents' surgeries held by individual Councillors where the surgery has been advertised.
- 1.8 Attendance at public and other meetings where the Member officially represents the Council on their instructions either in a specific case or as part of an established procedure and which he/she does not attend simply as a member of the public.
- 1.9 Attendance at recognised group meetings held on Council premises subject to a maximum of 2 meetings per month or 24 per annum.

2 OFFICIAL VISITS

- 2.1 Where the Council receives an official invitation to a public event, attendance at which will benefit or give value to the Council, then:
 - The Convener or Leader of the Administration or appropriate Committee Chair, Vice Chair or their nominated substitute may represent the Council.

Attendance at social or entertainment events, notwithstanding receipt of an invitation, will not be eligible for reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses.

- 2.2 Attendance at functions involving the provision of civic hospitality where a Member receives a formal invitation from the Council to attend.

3 CONSTITUENCY BUSINESS

3.1 Within a Members' own electoral ward attendance at Community-run events, meetings or visits to constituents to discuss matters pertinent to the ward or its inhabitants.

4 COUNCIL BUSINESS

4.1 Attendance by Convener, Leader of the Administration, Committee Chairs, Vice Chairs to Council offices or establishments where the visit is relevant to the Member's duties. Attendance by other Members should be restricted to meeting days or visits where prior appointments have been arranged.

4.2 Attendance at Council offices or establishments to access administrative support.

5 COURSES, CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS.

5.1 Attendance at courses, conferences and seminars which have been approved in advance by the relevant Service committee, or where not possible, by agreement with the Chief Executive in consultation with the Convener